

Hopewell Archeology:

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3. The Field Museum Hopewell Catalogue Project: Getting the Word Out

By Tristan T. Almazan, Stephen E. Nash, and Lauren Zych

The Hopewell Collection at the Field Museum is the world's second-largest (next to the Ohio Historical Society's) collection of material culture from the Hopewell site. Recently, Field Museum staff re-discovered cataloging forms from the 1980s and decided to use the information from this unfinished project as a starting block for creating a Hopewell catalogue. The catalogue (which we hope will be published) will act as a tool for disseminating data on the collection as well as serving to pique the interest of additional scholars in the Field Museum's collection.

The Collection

The Field Museum's Hopewell Collection comes primarily from one source — the 1891 and 1892 excavations by Warren K. Moorehead. Frederick W. Putnum, director of the Department of Ethnology and Archaeology for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, hired Moorehead (along with dozens of others), to collect material representing cultures of the Americas. Moorehead, a native Ohioan who had already excavated at Fort Ancient and published his findings (Moorehead 1890), was a natural choice for gathering material from the Hopewell site. He spent the fall and winter of 1891–1892 excavating there and keeping notes on his finds. Although he did not always keep detailed records, he and his crew nevertheless uncovered the most significant material to be collected from the site.



Figure 1 Stone disks from Mound 2. © The Field Museum, CSA39671.

The Field Museum's collection of Moorehead material encompasses roughly 800 catalogue numbers, although the number of individual pieces is much higher. The scope and content of the Hopewell Collection are impressive. For example, one storage room in the museum holds more than 7,000 chipped stone disks unearthed from Mound 2 (Figure 1). Not only is this impressive for sheer quantity, but the fact that the disks are made of Wyandotte chert from Southern Indiana makes it even more astonishing. Hundreds of pounds of obsidian came from the Obsidian Cliffs in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. Thousands of sheets of mica from Tennessee or North Carolina composed some of the strata of Moorehead Mound 17, while a large quantity of galena is believed to have accompanied a burial from that mound. One obsidian blade, among many others, measures 30 cm long by 12.5 cm wide (Figure 2). There are also many pearl beads, bear claws and teeth (Figure 3), copper ear spools, carved stone effigy figures, and mica and copper sheet ornaments.



Figure 2. Obsidian blade. © The Field Museum, A113969_11c; Cat. No. 56803.



Figure 3. Bear claws and teeth ornaments. © The Field Museum, A110123c; Cat. Nos. 56402 and 56427

The remainder of the museum's Hopewell Collection came from the Ohio Historical Society and the Kalamazoo Valley Museum. In 1925, the Field Museum gave material from its anthropology collections to the Ohio Historical Society in exchange for Hopewell material excavated by Henry C. Shetrone from 1922 to 1925. This collection contains casts and replicas, effigy pipes, celts, mica ornaments, and raw materials. In 1999, the Kalamazoo Valley Museum donated a collection of Hopewell and prehistoric Woodlands material to The Field Museum, as these materials had once been at The Field Museum and did not fit within the Kalamazoo Valley Museum's collecting purview. Taken together, the Ohio Historical Society and Kalamazoo Valley Museum components compose less than a quarter of the Field Museum's total Hopewell Collection.

Mound 25

One of the most fascinating group of objects in the Field Museum collection comes from Mound 25. This mound is the largest at the Hopewell site and contains the most interesting and complex array of material. Originally, Mound 25 was the site of a central building complex with plazas. Over time, burials were created in the building, as were separate deposits of exotic materials. The mound is in three sections, with burials only being in the middle and largest section. When excavated, Mound 25 held at least 100 burials, but the greatest groupings of material were in the "altar" deposits and a copper deposit. For example, large obsidian bifaces were found in "Altar 2." Nonetheless, some burials did hold unusual objects and unusual amounts of material. One burial (Moorehead Burial 248) is especially noteworthy (Figure 4). In Moorehead's words (Field Museum Library Archives, p. 125):



Figure 4. Copper and shell objects. © The Field Museum, A108265c; Cat. Nos. 56080, 56091, 56114, 56128, 56200, 56201, 56371, and 56751. (Note: The objects pictured above are from several different proveniences within the Hopewell site.)

At the head of the skeleton was a remarkable deposit of copper. Wood covered with copper in the form of deer antlers ... The antler shaped ornament was composed of wood covered with and incased in thin sheets of copper one-sixteenth of an inch thick. There were 4 prongs on each side of nearly equal length. The mass of copper in the center originally was in the form of a semicircle reaching from the lower jaw to the crown of the head. It has been pressed flat by the weight of the earth, but part of the original contour is still apparent.

Another burial (Moorehead Burial 260-261) contained a large amount of copper (Figure 5) including several celts and adzes. Others held shell and bone beads, textile imprints, carved effigies, pearls, and copper plates.



Figure 5. Copper ornament with pearl eye. © The Field Museum, A110028c; Cat. No. 56356.

The Cataloging Project

The Field Museum's project to catalogue the Hopewell Collection is ongoing. It began last year, when museum staff funded by the Save America's Treasures program (NEH PT-50004-03) were busy organizing and creating finding aids for the North American anthropology archives. They found two boxes containing cataloging forms, notes, and photos from a project started, but never finished, in the mid-1980s. Michael Moseley and the late Pat Essenpreis headed the project, and N'omi Greber acted as a consultant. David Jessup, then a student at the University of Chicago, completed most of the catalogue forms. A large amount of data had been recorded about the individual Hopewell objects as a result of their efforts, but the project fizzled, and the unfinished product ended up in the archives. We contacted Greber, and Jim Brown of Northwestern University, about the project and they agreed to help us make a final effort to complete it and, if possible, publish a catalogue containing a summary and synthesis of these descriptive data.

The first step in this process was to put the data in electronic format, not as a matter of preservation (the cards and writing in No. 2 pencil will be around a lot longer than electronic media), but to ease data manipulation and access. We enlisted the help of graduate student Lauren Zych of the University of Chicago, and in the fall of 2003 we began entering the data from 1,300 forms into a project-specific FileMaker Pro database. Syeda Razeen, a summer intern from Loyola University, has joined in the project to assist with the data entry and to inventory the collection. The information from Zych's database will be combined with Razeen's inventory data to create a complete catalogue of extant Field Museum holdings. The next step will be to compile the data into coherent and useful sets for publication.

The collection is definitely not without problems, however. There are missing objects, missing data, and missing associations between objects and excavation contexts. Provenience information, where it exists, will have to be closely scrutinized because Moorehead's notes were not always accurate, much less precise. The project will not be halted by these problems, however. We will do what we can, but we believe it is more important to disseminate these data, even if they are less than perfect, than to keep them in archival purgatory because of a few errors that we cannot solve. Science is a cumulative and iterative process. Our goal is to provide scholars with basic data about a world-class collection, thereby exciting them to a world of analytical possibilities, the surface of which has barely been scratched at The Field Museum (Figure 5).

Conclusion

Museums are continuously engaged in the effort to gather more information on their collections and The Field Museum is no different in this regard. Because many researchers use these materials, we especially value scholarly data that will increase the scholarly utility of our collections. The rediscovery of the Hopewell catalogue forms is allowing us to expand our knowledge of the collection and of the Hopewell site itself. Disseminating this information will hopefully bring in more scholars and even more findings in a positive-feedback loop. Some of these data may enrich labels for Hopewell objects to be exhibited in the Field Museum's new *Hall of Americas*, which opens in 2006. No matter the results of our Hopewell Catalogue Project, the presence of an electronic catalogue of this important collection will allow us to better serve the scholarly community in engaging new and innovative research on the fascinating Hopewell culture.

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